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Loggins, Messina warm the Forum

By DOUG PRINGLE
for The Gazette

Twelve thousand people sailed joyously before the country/Carribean rythms of Loggins and Messina at the Montreal Forum last night.

Jim Messina first became known as a member of the legendary Buffalo Springfield. He then went on to found Poco, before leaving and sitting in on what was to have been Kenny Loggins solo-album. The album proved so successful that after much persuading he decided to join Kenny on a permenant basis — and a large crowd last night was certainly happy he did.

They opened the show acoustically with a medley of some of their well known songs, and were then joined by bass player Larry Sims who sang lead on one song before becoming the third voice of a trio.

The next thing we knew there were ten musicians on stage, the whole transition from duo to group having been as smooth as silk.

The lengthy To Be Free was a perfect vehicle for the group's brilliance. Full of subtle flavours and rhythms, the song the crowd totally spellbound.

The tightness of the group was astonishing even considering the fact they had been together for the making of the last album So Fine. The oldies from their new album were cleverly incorporated into a stage show that flowed as one continuous unit with occasional resting points.

The old Hank Snow song I'm Moving On featured some excellent fiddling wizardry from Richard Greene, who was quite superb throughout.

There was a nice touch in the middle of the set when Canadian keyboard man Jack Lenz introduced the group in French.

POWER

It was musical entertainment of the highest quality, yet with all the good feeling of a hoedown.

Opening the show was Richie Havens, a man who has been a star in his own right for many years.

One of the leading folk musicians of the 60s he still has the energy and power that captured the crowd at Woodstock. The Forum warmed to him immediately and were swept along by his driving rhythms. At his best when interpreting other people's material, highlights of his show included Wheel about me and Here Comes The Sun — although the set was spoiled to a degree by the overlong breaks between.

Motherless Child with its impassioned plea for freedom was a rousing finale that earned him a standing ovation and an encore.

Montreal has been fortunate in the number of fine shows it has had in the past year — but last night's has to rank amongst the very best.

Thelma Farmer and Bonnie Gruen in The Matchmaker.

Personal success

Actress nearly overcomes script

HELEN HUGHES
. . . excellent

By JACK KAPICA
of The Gazette

There is nothing in theatre like a solo performance. Actor and audience face off, and it's entirely up to the actor to carry the entire evening.

When it works, it can be brilliant.

Helen Hughes, making her Montreal debut for the Moiseiwo Theatre at Centaur 1 in One Crowded Hour, is an actress who can. And, if it wasn't for a weakly structured script by Charlotte Fielden, Hughes would have been mesbed on stage at the premiere last night.

Hughes plays 67-year-old Mabel Harrison with a quality so endearing it could wilt the spikey cactus which adorns her new home, the New Life Guest Lodge in Phoenix, Arizona.

She's trying to get over the recent death of her husband — whom she called Buttercups — and has run from her home in Lachine to feast on a dry climate for her rheumatism and on company her age.

Hughes is just amazing. Her laugh tinkles, and she flirts shamelessly with the audience, to whom she talks directly for almost two hours. For the first two acts, she plays with her audience with winks, sniggers and tons of affection.

But it's the third act which does her in.

Fielden, also making a debut of her own as a playwright, has obviously lost control of her material. Despite a talent for exceptionally funny lines and an occasional insight into delightful symbolism, she overloads the play with too much stage business and loses track of the mood.

In the third act, Fielden has Mabel paint a complete picture of surrounding mountains, an action which takes an unconscionable length of time to unfold. All this is done for one night gag — the ever-growing cactus in the centre of the painting, which becomes an obscene phallic symbol.

This business turns poor Mabel into a ludicrous old bore instead of the ripening, awakening creature she is supposed to become.

Also, in the second act, Fielden forces her character into a discussion about sex which ends tragically. The monologue, about her never having had an orgasm, goes beautifully until it ends in an inexplicable paroxysm, which begins as a heart attack and ends as an orgasm.

OVERSTATED

Director Ain Snyder is partly to blame as well. She has a tendency to overstate Fielden's actions, marshalling Hughes about the stage in movements that are too broad and hearty for a woman who has been repressed for so long.

But Hughes, at least before the intermission, comes through most of these problems with shining ease, even if her strong New Hampshire accent makes her supposed life in Lachine a total joke.

She has a charm which can warm the coldest script, and for that the Melanie Theatre must be grateful.

The production continues at the Centaur 1 until Oct. 12.

Bizarre or banal

Lewis Furey returns home

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

After recovering from his debut club tour of the U.S., Lewis Furey has returned home for a two-week engagement at Valentin's.

Furey's strange panoramic tales aroused much interest in this city when the singer-composer-pianist burst upon the scene a couple of years back.

The songs are often nasty, sardonic and eminently precocious—the product of a road that took Furey (born Greenblatt) from Le Conservatoire de Musique et d'Art Dramatique de la Province de Québec to Juilliard to a cross country train ride to Vancouver (where he started writing verse for underground magazines) to Tokyo, Berlin and London (appeared in obscure porno movies, picked up foreign accents, lifestyles and movie stars, going to gym and working in a sleezy French restaurant").

Such experiences under his belt, Furey was encouraged to perform by Leonard Cohen and eventually Cat Steven's manager took him on, resulting in his first album.

The American tour, over the summer, coincided with the disc's release and began in New York's influential Bottom Line club, where Furey won raves as a kind of underground ingenue from After Dark and Lance Loud. Unfortunately, the tour was cut short when Furey was struck down with hepatitis.

The album, which was recorded in Mertin Heights, has gained a measure of "underground" FM radio acceptance, as well as a severe review from Rolling Stone.

At Valentin's, Furey returns to the hard-core local audience that's supported him through thick and thin. The club is dark and intimate, with a space cleared away amongst the tables for the artiste.

The small lithe singer at home under a single spot light. He punches out his fay cynicism with head tilted and hands stabbing dramatically at the keyboard. The songs such as Hustler's Tango, Kinda Shy, Lewis is Crazy, and new items from the next album, can be both bizarre and banal, depending upon one's affinity to the subject matter.

Furey continues at Valentin's through Oct. 20.

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Film not free speech, says lawyer

By BRUCE LITTLE
Southam News Services

HALIFAX — A Nova Scotia government lawyer argued early this weeks entertainment should not be given the same protection which the law bestows on freedom of speech.

Defending the provincial government's constitutional right to censor films, Bruce Preeper told a panel of Nova Scotia Supreme Court judges that the banning of films is just one form of regulating films, something he said was within provincial powers.

The case, a major challenge to the right of provinces to censor films, was launched last year by journalist Gerard McNeil after the Amusements Regulation Board banned the film Last Tango in Paris from Nova Scotia.

Earlier McNeil's lawyers had argued that matters of obscenity should be left to the federal Criminal Code. By using the Theatres and Amusements Act to deal with obscenity, they argued, the province was acting outside its powers.

If McNeil wins, the decision could wipe out provincial film censors.

Preeper argued that the provincial law would collide with the Criminal Code only if the censorship board defined obscenity differently from the Code, but he said the board has made no such definition.

Justice Gordon Cooper objected to that line of argument: "We're not concerned with what the board has done. We're concerned with what power it has."

Chief Justice Ian MacKeigan said there was "certainly a partial overlapping of the two provisions — this one and the Criminal Code."

Preeper replied that if the two laws did collide, such an event would invalidate not the provincial law, but only that particular use of the law.

His argument that entertainment was not a matter of free speech also drew some queries from the judges, who wondered how a dividing line could be drawn between political expression and entertainment.

Justice Thomas Coffin cited the novels of 20th century writer Charles Dickens. "He wasn't very kind to the status quo."

Noon-hour concerts return as one of PdA's programs

By JACOB SISKIND
of The Gazette

The Concerts-midi (noon-hour concerts) formula which proved so popular last year will be repeated this season at Place Arts.

The programs, a co-production of the Montreal Symphony and the Place, will be presented on Wednesdays at noon and will feature Mario Duchesneau and members of the Montreal Symphony, starting October 22.

As with last year, these events are being sponsored by the Place Desjardins — which is nearing completion opposite the Place des Arts on St. Catherine Street.

These hour-long concerts are one of four projects being offered by the Place des Arts in co-operation with other cultural agencies. With Les Jeunesses Musicales du Canada, the Place des Arts is offering a series of Sunday programs at 11 a.m., concerts by young talents who are for the most part making their first appearance before local audiences.

These Sons et Brioches take place every alternate Sunday. On the weeks when there are no concerts a series of lectures on Art, in French, by Jean-Claude Planchard of the University of Quebec is being offered. The first of these, October 12, will be on Venice, City of Waters, and will be illustrated with slides.

A fourth series of programs, on Thursday at noon, is entitled La Chant d'Astil and will present young Quebec performers — poets, singers, story tellers and instrumentalists.

All events take place in the Piano Nobile, the upper foyer of the Salle Wilfrid Pelletier.

Matchmaker is well handled by National Theatre School

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

There is a sizeable number of people who regularly attend the student productions at the National Theatre School here. This is not only because the shows are free.

It is also because the NTS offers a rare opportunity to see live theatre, to see plays competently presented, to see actors who, if their approach is conventional, are nonetheless sound.

The current case in point is The Matchmaker, the Thornton Wilder comedy the third year acting class at the NTS unveiled last night at the Monument National.

True to form, it was a good show. The Matchmaker, which has the questionable distinction of being the basis for Hello, Dolly! is a fun show.

It is more or less a farce, in which a widowed Yonkers feed - and grain dealer named Vandergelder decides he must marry again. His adviser in this quest is one Dolly Levi, who has designs of her own, and the chief object in it is Mrs. Molloy — who soon develops ideas of her own, too.

Amidst the sometimes Feydeau-esque silliness — hiding behind screens, under tables and in cupboards — Wilder throws in a Wilde line or two (Vandergelder's definition of a wife: "a housekeeper who thinks she's a housekolder") to remind you that to use conventional or even antique theatre techniques does not always mean a lack of fresh ideas.

This all came out in last night's show. Director Larry Iacoutt moved the play reasonably well. Only in the early restaurant scene just after the intermission did the pace slacken — and one suspects an editing of the script might have been the best solution for that.

The cast was predictably good — there were young men and women who if they have not yet found their acting wings, have at least forgotten their bussons.

Grant Lowe brought an appropriate swagger to his Vandergelder. Patricia Lane was surprisingly poised as Dolly. Robert Clinton showed Keaton-esque flair as Cornelius Hackl, and Jennifer Browne was truly charming as Mrs. Molloy.

But there was no-one who fell short in his performance.

The sets by Debra Hanson and Jacques Durand's costumes were first class.

Surprise — a great drummer's here

By NIGHTHAWK
for The Gazette

This may come as a total surprise — but Art Blakey, one of the greatest jazz drummers, is at Le Concert Plus this week, with the most intense group.

Blakey was not too happy on opening night as he faced an almost empty club. Club managers can sometimes be hard to understand.

No one in this city seems to know that Blakey and his Jazz Messengers are here, because management didn't see fit to advertise.

It's ridiculous to think that a man of Blakey's stature — who's been recognized as a master drummer since the late 30s — can open to fifty members of the grapevine only.

Yet Blakey was graceful enough to thank his audience for being there.

He was graceful enough to launch into one of the most driving opening sets the club has ever had, and never was there a trace of anything but music and joy.

The Jazz Messengers, whom Blakey introduced as "The gentlemen of the aggravation," include "one of the uncrowned kings of the trumpet, Bill Hartman; our secretary, shake-dancer, composer arranger, a new wonder of the tenor sax, David Schnitter; one of the finest undiscovered keyboardists, Bonnie Matheos on piano; on bass, the workhorse of the group, Youbo Chin Suzuki — who came all the way from Asia to join the Jazz Messengers; and on drums and the youngest member of the group, Mrs. Blakey's only son, Art Blakey, one of the most dynamic drummers the jazz scene has to offer, is a relentless driver. He pushes on the drum, and he pushes vocally too, "Come oh, man, blow . . ."

There is no rest, no peace, no tomorrow. No way anyone can fake it and bask in the lazy aura of musical pretense. With Blakey, the sidemen have to deliver or be delivered.

The music is powerful, rhythmically and melodically. The musicians work and improvise on the edge of their creative zeal. By all means, go and hear the message.

CRTC hearings plod carefully

Radio &TV

by Joan Irwin

The Canadian Radio-Television Commission began a slow plod through the agenda of its Montreal public hearing yesterday as its former chairman, Pierre Juneau, entered the final week of his election campaign in Hochelaga.

Acting chairman Harry Boyle wasn't in evidence yesterday. Commissioner Real Therrien was at the helm as several Quebec radio stations and Montreal's National Cablevision Limited appeared for licence renewals and various other things.

It's probably reassuring to the public to know how exceedingly carefully the commission investigates each application.

Radio battle

Yesterday, for instance, the commission spent 1½ hours listening to a battle over an AM radio application for the town of Lac Etchemin in Beauce.

A station in St-Georges wants to increase its coverage to include neighboring Lac Etchemin, but a station in Beauce-Nord sees troubling implications in the application and opposes it.

There were accusations that the new application is really designed to serve the large local centre of Ste-Marie (pop. 7,000), and the commissioners listened attentively as the rival broadcasters argued over the right to serve their small rural audiences.

It may make for drawn-out hearings, but it's good to see that as much care and attention being paid to applications like this as are paid to multi-million-dollar deals for cable and TV.

National Cablevision

One of the big operations came up next on the agenda, as it happened, when National Cablevision Limited appeared for renewal of its cable licences to serve most of the eastern part of Montreal, Laval, and other neighboring communities on the South Shore.

By a curious coincidence, the CRTC's rival as regulatory body of broadcasting is Quebec's Public Service Board, was also holding a meeting yesterday afternoon in Quebec City. The commission generously postponed its lunch break in order to hear the opening remarks of National Cablevision senior executive Jean-Marie Poitras before he rushed off to make his appearance in Quebec City.

Among topics of interest to the commission was the continuing investment of the Quebec government (in the shape of La Caisse de depot) in the cable company.

The CRTC has requested several times during the past few years tha the Quebec role be reduced from 30 to 20 per cent, but the company pleads that a reasonable price for the shares is impossible to negotiate in the present feeble state of investor interest in cable.

As expected, the Montreal cable company asked the commission to reconsider its recently-announced policy forcing deletion of commercials in programming from the U.S.

Citing economic, administrative and moral difficulties in implementing the policy, a National Cablevision spokesman pointed out the probability of retaliation by U.S. stations whose signals reach Montreal.

Both major Montreal cable systems — National Cablevision and Cable TV Ltd. — are known to oppose the commercial deletion policy and neither has moved to implement it. The CRTC however, has ordered Toronto-Hamilton systems to do so as a condition of license, and said that the policy will apply across the country.

Discussion of the problems of additional channels on cable in this area and the difficulty of finding reliable converters was in progress when the necessity to report on the hearing forced my departure.

Upcoming events

Helen Hutchison of CTV's Canada AM will begin tonight an co-host of the network's Wednesday hockey telecasts. She's the first woman to be part of the broadcasts in the 23 year history of the Canadian Sports Network. Her interview tonight is with Yvan Cournoyer.

Two representatives of the St. Jean Baptiste Society which asked for equal time on CFCF radio after the Robert-son-Springate anti-Bill 22 campaign will appear on the show this Thursday and Friday.

François Albert Anger and Gérald Godin will join Robertson (who will act only as moderator) and his audience for the full programs from 10 a.m. to noon.

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